

MAR 11 1936

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



CONTENTS

DECEMBER, MCMXXXV

RECENT PLAYS: BY S. R.
LITTLEWOOD / "FIRST-
NIGHTER" CLUBS: BY SIR
JOHN MARTIN-HARVEY /
ECONOMICS OF THE LITTLE
THEATRE: BY ASHLEY DUKES
/ ILLUSTRATIONS /

6d.

Published by
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
9 FITZROY SQUARE
LONDON
W.1

STAGE LIGHTING EQUIPMENT FOR SALE OR HIRE

AS SUPPLIED TO ALL THE
LEADING THEATRES AND
AMATEUR DRAMATIC
SOCIETIES

Strand Electric AND ENGINEERING CO. LTD.

Managing Directors:

A. T. EARNshaw. PHILLIP SHERIDAN.
19-24 & 28, Floral St., London, W.C.2

Telephone:
Temple Bar
7464 (5 lines)

Telegram:
Spotite Rand,
London

The Perfect Xmas Gift
For Drama League Members

THE PLAY-LOVERS' DIARY

WITH FOREWORD BY MARIE TEMPEST

The ideal engagement calendar with
forty-eight pages of valuable theatrical
information, including:

STAGE DIRECTORY, LEGAL NOTES AND
GLOSSARY OF STAGE TERMS

1/- and 3/6 (by post 2d. extra)

Published by

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

AND

CHARLES LETTS & CO.

Obtainable from:-

DRAMA LEAGUE BOOKSHOP,
9, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

MISS WEBBER'S TYPEWRITING OFFICE

PLAYS, PARTS, AUTHORS MSS., ETC.

VISITING SECRETARIES

DUPLICATING

6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

Telephone: Whitehall 8324.

THE COMING OF SIMON EVAL

(3 Acts — 1 Scene — 6M, 4F.)

"Effectively Eerie" - - - - - Stage
"A Modern Morality Play" - - - - - Catholic Times
"A Companion to 'The Passing of
The Third Floor Back'" - - - - - Northern Echo

This play has been recently translated into Welsh, and
Typescript copies are now available.

Typescripts 2/6 post free from:

JAMES B. PINKER & SON,
Talbot House, Arundel Street, Strand, W.C.2

VALERIE PRENTIS—ENID BARR

STAGE COSTUME AND HOW TO WEAR IT

Lecture Demonstrations

on
COSTUME AND MOVEMENT COLOUR SCHEMES
FOUNDING A STAGE WARDROBE

Write for NEW LECTURE SYLLABUS
to 10, Charlbert Street, St. John's Wood, N.W.8

BOOK NOW

Transport Hall

Westminster (Close to Lambeth Bridge)

FOR STAGE PLAYS CONCERTS & DANCES

Full Stage Lighting and Curtains
Excellent Acoustics Seating 250 (tip-up seats)
REASONABLE TERMS DRESS REHEARSAL FREE

Full particulars from:

Lettings Dept. Transport House, Smith Square, S.W.1.
Phone: VICTORIA 7671

All Advertisements should be addressed to the British Drama League (Advert. Dept.).



I
V

==
==

I
sa
in
pr
to
be
“o
vi
do
D
al
hi
pe

M
th
co
o
“
e
to
a
d
S
fr
a

tr
to
M
g
a
in
h
a
M
f
e

DRAMA

VOL 14

DECEMBER MCMXXXV

NUMBER 3

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By S. R. Littlewood

IT has been an actor's month. The dramatists have had little that is fresh to say. They have been at their happiest in giving good parts to good players. The producers have been very much—sometimes too much—to the fore. I have more than once been tempted to wish that we could have a "close time" for producers. Let them do their vitally important work just as editors of papers do, but keep in the background themselves. Directly a producer's name is—justly or no—all over the programme, the tendency is for him or her to try to justify it by some startling point of view.

I am afraid this has damaged Mr. Nugent Monck's revival of "Timon of Athens" for the Group Theatre at Westminster. No-one could be more welcome back to London than our old friend of the Maddermarket, and "Timon" cannot help being fascinating to every lover of Shakespeare. It is ridiculous to pretend that the play represents its author at his best. Much of it is poor and shallow dramaturgy. But how often one can hear Shakespeare speaking through it and can feel what good it must have done him to get all that "perilous stuff" off his chest!

In these circumstances an assertively fantastic production was for me only a hindrance to the enjoyment of Shakespeare's lines. Many of these, too, seemed to have been cut to give time for a long "Ballet of Courtezans" and the rampaging round the auditorium of interpolated brawlers. Mr. Ernest Milton had his moments, when he forgot his mannerisms, as Timon. On the whole, I much preferred Mr. Atkins's simpler treatment of this simple fable at the Old Vic thirteen years ago, and even that at the Court twenty years before,

when Frank Cooper as Alcibiades had to hold up the forest over Timon's head.

It has been pleasant to see Mr. St. John Ervine's sparkling comedy, "Anthony and Anna" make its West End arrival at last. This should have happened, of course, ten years ago, when it was first published. One would not then have been so conscious of things being "dated." It is a little late at this time to bring in a hero of the Great War as a gay young bachelor. Lady Cynthia and her Australian do not convince me anyhow. This may be due to mistakes of casting; but I have a suspicion that the characters were not fully envisaged by Mr. Ervine himself. Mr. Harold Warrender and Miss Jessica Tandy were both worth waiting for, not to mention Mr. James Harcourt as the old inn-keeper and Mr. Morris Harvey as the American "pop."

Of plays in which actors and actresses have "carried all before them" we have had four in the West End alone—not counting the musical shows. Miss Dodie Smith's "Call It A Day" is one of those beautifully acted domestic fairy-tales that never fail. "Just like ourselves!" says everybody when they see Mr. Owen Nares and Miss Fay Compton as a faithful middle-aged pair, married for twenty years and each captivating an unexpected admirer on the same afternoon. The truth is, of course, that everybody is not Owen Nares nor Fay Compton, and that the flattering little amatory adventure with a happy ending is just what does not happen to everybody. But how charming to dream that it might!

So with Mr. Robert Morley's "Short Story." If it were not for the seizing personalities of Miss Marie Tempest, Dame Sybil Thorndike

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

and Mr. A. E. Matthews, I shudder to think how short the story might have been. As it is, all the world wants to see this "second Mrs. Fraser" win back her errant husband, with Miss Ursula Jeans again as the younger interloper. With every homage to Miss Tempest's art, one may confess to finding more memorable surprise in Dame Sybil, with her triumphant broad comedy as Lady Bucktrout, the paid chaperon. "You're a comic, Sybil!" exclaims Mr. Russell Thorndike in his delightful book, and he is to a great extent right. For all her Hecuba and Imogen, Jane Clegg and Beatrice Cenci, Dame Sybil knows well enough the tragedy of being a comedian. It has again and again lured her into burlesque of anything short of greatness. What a safety-valve to her sense of humour this part will be, if she is not held to it for too long!

Then there are Mr. Peter Traill's "Tread Softly," with Mr. Ronald Squire and Miss Yvonne Arnaud both having the time of their lives to the audience's delight, and Mr. P. G. Wodehouse's "The Inside Stand," confessedly written for and inspired by Mr. Ralph Lynn, and revealing in Miss Olive Blakeney exactly how an American "duchess" should look and speak. These things are but toys. They attempt, and do, no more than put people in a good humour by wit and charm and brightness and the skill of actors. But they are no less true theatre on that account.

My space will not permit me, I am afraid, to do justice to musical medleys, like "Seeing Stars" at the Gaiety and "Twenty to One" at the Coliseum, where Mr. Lupino Lane achieves exploits in accomplished clowning that would be hailed with dithyrambs if he had been an importation from Paris or Vienna. I must also forego my tribute to Mr. Henry Cass's Old Vic revival of Tchekov's "The Three Sisters," now replaced by "Macbeth." But I should like just to mention how glad I was to see the first performance in London of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth's delightful fantasy, "Haunted Houses," at the People's Theatre, St. Pancras.

With its poignant yet exhilarating blend of grimness and optimism, and the sense of the gay macabre in Mr. Lucifer set against St. Valentine's chaplet of spring flowers, this seems to me a play which only waits for the right actors. The young people are safe enough. The interior playlets come through

of themselves. But Lucifer and Valentine need imagination and creative power of a rare order. Meanwhile, an ideal play for repertory, where demands are not so fierce.

SHAKESPEARE MATINEE

ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE.
Drury Lane, November 26

This unique and memorable Matinée was organised by Mr. Ivor Novello and Mr. Sydney Carroll on behalf of the National Theatre Appeal Committee. The Duke and Duchess of York, and the Princess Elizabeth, were present; and most of the leading actors and actresses of the day gave their services.

The following EPILOGUE was written by Mr. James Bridie, and spoken by Miss Elizabeth Bergner.

MY DEAREST FRIENDS,

In this wonderful town of London there is a square, built to the glory of a day when certain poor sailors and beautiful ships were beaten to pieces by guns. To the north of that square there is a house where those days are honoured on which the Lord God gave visions to His sons Rembrandt, Leonardo, Velasquez, Turner and many more.

There are others whose dreams are made manifest, not in paint on canvas, but in life on the living stage. Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller, Euripides, these are not little names, but you have not yet given them a house—a house where you may share their dreams with them.

We all know that these present days are difficult. We know that there are many of the dead and of the living to whom you wish to pay your tribute, but may not. Your great racehorses, your boxers, your statesmen, your strikers of the ball with the bat and kickers of the ball with the foot, they wait in hundreds for your reverence.

But this art for which we, on this stage, live and work and die is, to us, a great thing. One of the mightiest of all dead men has spoken to you to-day in the voices of his living servants. Do you think it a worthy thing that he should have a house where he and those who follow him may speak in his tongue to you for ever and ever and ever?

Adieu.

ECONOMICS OF THE PROFESSIONAL LITTLE THEATRE

By Ashley Dukes

Director of the Mercury Theatre, London

IN this short article I propose to leave out all questions of the artistic status of the small-scale professional theatre, and to regard it solely as a producing unit within the existing organisation of the stage. The subject is limited to the technical and practicable possibility—especially the financial possibility—of a playhouse that seats from 120 to 400 persons, employs a paid professional producer and a paid company of players, accepts original plays and performs them on the royalty basis which is the admitted privilege of the profession, and generally conducts the business of theatre management in a diminutive way of its own.

I shall assume that the theatre of which we speak is an ordinary public playhouse and not a club or semi-private affair with a subscription audience. Theatres of this latter type have done good work, but they are in their nature makeshifts, and they are bound to exhaust their audience for every play within a short space of time. In so far as they discreetly evade the fire regulations of the constituted authority, they run a slight but measurable risk for their spectators; in so far as they dodge the censorship of plays they hold greater possibilities of boredom than of freedom or enlightenment.

The small public playhouse on the other hand, aims like every other playhouse at adjusting the supply of a certain kind of play to the demand. Far from wishing to please a limited audience for a limited space of time, it seeks to perform every piece as long as people will come to see it. Theatres of this kind have existed in many European cities for the past twenty years, and have even obtained a footing in New York and London. It is their practical machinery that we have to consider.

The first requirement is an audience willing to pay at least £20 nightly to see the play. This is the minimum until the costs of production have been cleared off. After that, £15 a night may suffice; but it is safer to put down

£20 as the essential for covering running costs, and to take off speedily any play that does not approach this figure for a week of consecutive nights. Assuming that not less than six or more than eight weekly performances are given, this means a prospective box-office revenue of £120 to £160. (The basis of calculation is three-quarters capacity, the highest average basis on which any one should attempt to run a playhouse). The figure is likely to be slightly augmented by receipts from refreshments and programmes, but these should be regarded strictly as windfalls.

Just how to distribute this revenue by expenditure is the problem of the little professional theatre. The first charge is clearly the author's royalty, which at five per cent amounts to £8 weekly for 8 performances. Next comes the company, including everybody from producer and actors to stage managers and stage hands. They receive between them 45 per cent., which on eight performances amounts to £72 minimum. No large salaries can be paid out of this sum, and in general £10 must be the top figure; but it is possible to pay a number of expense salaries of £3 a week, rising on percentage to £4 or £5; and even to remunerate the producer on a reasonable royalty basis. Without going into further details on this side, let us say that the author, and all other people responsible on the stage receive one-half of the weekly revenue of the box-office.

The front of the house has to make ends meet with the other half, and it is naturally pre-occupied with keeping production expenses as low as possible since they must be spread over the first three or four weeks and will increase the running costs accordingly. If these production costs are not more than £60 or £75, we can put down 15 per cent of the receipts as sufficient to cover them within a short space of time; if they are heavier they must be spread over a proportionately longer period. This brings the total of expenses

ECONOMICS OF THE PROFESSIONAL LITTLE THEATRE

up to 65 per cent of revenue. Another 15 per cent must be added for newspaper and general advertisement. In London the little professional playhouse has no chance unless it displays its announcements in the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, one evening paper, the official guide of the booking agencies, and two or three weekly reviews. The cost of these insertions is round about £20 weekly, that is to say it absorbs the entire receipts of one performance. Incidentally this is the only expenditure that is proportionately heavier for the very small than for the very large theatre; and skilful management may contrive to make the bars and programmes (as in other theatres) pay a great part of it.

These various items bring the total percentage of expenses up to 80, and the remaining 20 per cent is the margin left to cover rent, rates and taxes, depreciation, heating, lighting, service and all the multitudinous overhead charges of a playhouse. The percentage appears small, but the actual sum of £35 weekly (on eight performances) is not negligible. And it must be remembered that we are budgeting for receipts of three-quarters capacity. Should the theatre be sold out the proportion available for overhead charges rises steeply and may amount to 30 or 40 per cent of the gross. In fact every success, granted a run of one or two months, will pay the costs of production of several failures (but not their running costs).

The adjustment of prices to seating capacity depends on so many factors, including the artistic quality of the play, that it cannot be discussed here. At the Mercury I have a house seating only 140, which can nevertheless comfortably take £25 a night. A house with 200 seats is clearly better from every standpoint. Actually the little theatre cannot be run at all (at least in London) on less than £20 a performance, but it can be run with real ease and freedom at £30.

It will be noted that no allowance for profit has been made in these figures. The little professional theatre cannot make profits in the ordinary sense of the word. And if it can convince His Majesty's Customs of this fact and of its own cultural aims, it may even hope for relief from Entertainments Duty—with corresponding benefit to its company of artists and the cause of dramatic presentation.

"FIRST-NIGHTER" CLUBS IN THE PROVINCES

By Sir John Martin-Harvey

I have been much interested in looking over the programme for the Conference at Stratford-on-Avon, to see that on the 26th a proposal was to be made by Mr. W. Bushill Matthews that the "Drama League should consider the means of establishing "first-nighter" clubs in the various centres with the aim of ensuring better first-night audiences for the Touring and Repertory Companies appearing in the local professional theatres in legitimate dramatic work."

This proposal shows a kindly appreciation of a new danger threatening the living theatre, more particularly as it affects the touring company in the Provinces, which has caused considerable anxiety in the ranks of my fellow workers.

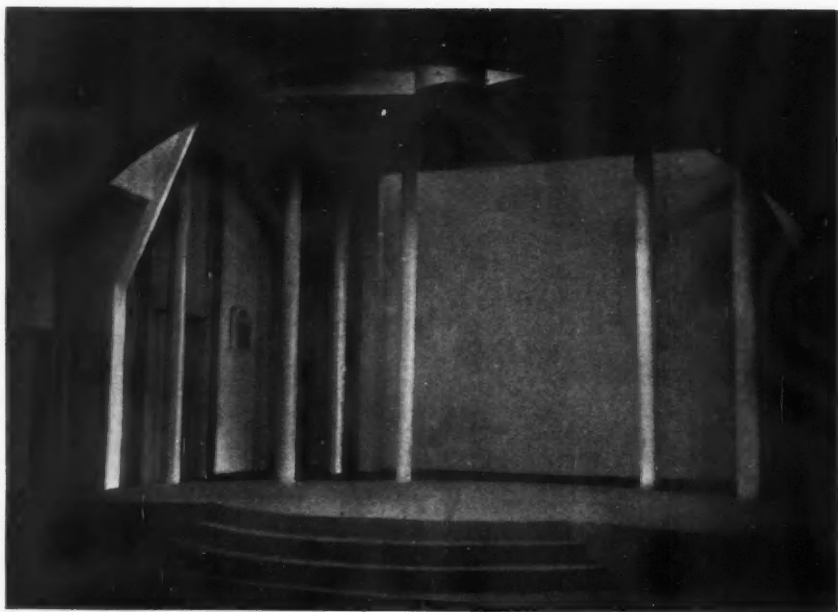
I think there can be no doubt that the great extension of interest in, and the support for the work of amateurs in the country at large, has become a serious handicap to the average touring company, and the greatest possible relief would be felt by the members and managers of such companies, if some means similar to those suggested in Mr. Bushill Matthews' proposal can be carried into effect.

The pleasant myth is still encouraged that the amateur welcomes an opportunity of seeing the professional at work, with the hope that he may benefit by the study. Local theatre managers will be found entirely to disagree with this supposition. Their experience is that the amateur is indifferent to the offer of the local manager to see the work of the professional companies, even at a reduced rate of admission. There is no question, too, that the multiplicity of amateur societies, supported by an increasing number of admiring friends and relations, is drawing a large amount of support from the professional stage, and is adding one more difficulty to a profession which is already threatened with extinction by the inroads of mechanized dramatic art.

The formation of "first-nighter clubs" would go far to relieve the soreness of those professionals who have given their lives to



THOMAS À BECKET (MR. ROBERT SPEAIGHT),
AND THE FOUR TEMPTERS, IN "MURDER
IN THE CATHEDRAL" BY T. S. ELIOT, AT
THE MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON, PRO-
DUCED BY E. MARTIN BROWNE.



THE PERMANENT STAGE AT THE
VIEUX COLOMBIER, PARIS,
DESIGNED BY M. BARSACQ.

"FIRST-NIGHTER" CLUBS IN THE PROVINCES

the cultivation of their art, and who feel a pardonable indignation that, to put it bluntly, "the bread is being taken out of their mouths" by a body of well-meaning people who already presumably have jobs of their own, and to whom "the beautiful and difficult art" of

acting can be nothing more than a pastime for their spare moments.

I do sincerely trust that the proposal of Mr. Bushill Matthews will receive a strong recommendation for prompt and active support.

THE WORK OF MICHEL SAINT-DENIS

By Carl Wildman

This article is of special interest in view of the announcement that M. Saint-Denis is about to open a new Studio for the study and practice of dramatic art in England.

THE name of M. Saint-Denis has become familiar to London theatre-goers during the last six months as the producer of "Noah" at the New, and the "Sowers of the Hills" at the Westminster. But no one who saw the performances of the *Compagnie Des Quinze* in London, Paris, or any other part of the Continent, could fail to be aware of the importance of this producer, or could help wondering how such a company came to be.

Now that we are fortunate enough to have M. Saint-Denis settling amongst us and founding a studio, hopes are running high for an important new movement in the *English* stage. What hopes we entertain are founded on our knowledge of M. Saint-Denis' achievements and his special equipment.

For five years he has been the chief animator of one of the completest and most harmonious companies known in the theatre (I am not here considering ballet). There was something unique about the *Compagnie Des Quinze* which made it possible for an atmosphere to be created which could awaken the imagination with the ease and apparent simplicity of music. It was the harmony resulting from a uniform training, culture and encouragement in all the spheres of theatrical activity. But such a school, group or company, even such a master, cannot be the product of a moment's inspiration and a financial backer; years of patient experiment and hard work are necessary preliminaries. M. Saint-Denis' star rose in one of the soundest schools that have existed in Europe, that directed by M. Jacques Copeau.

(How many of us wish we could have had such a mentor!)

It was Jacques Copeau who, turning his back on the theatre of the day, whether commercial, realistic, symbolistic, or simply dominated by the painter, decided to start remaking the theatre from the beginning. He began by sweeping the stage free of all but the essentials, building a permanent architectural setting which could be modified to represent any scene, and concentrating all the attention on the interpretation and the staging. To *stage*, he said, means to invent, and cause to reign amongst the characters, that secret invisible bond, that reciprocating sensitiveness and mysterious correspondence without which the drama—even though it is interpreted by the best actors—loses the best part of its expression.

There is not space to deal with Copeau's particular achievements, but we must note that, with his ever enquiring mind he gradually worked nearer to the essentials of theatrical creation and found support for his ideas in the works of the Swiss critic, Adolphe Appia, and our exile, Gordon Craig. He began to see, like Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre, that nothing short of a school with very young people would give him the results he craved for.

The problem of invention and of interpretation became closely connected in his mind: the actor must develop an understanding of the creative work of the poet, and the poet of stage-craft, and both must fully understand

THE WORK OF MICHEL SAINT-DENIS

the architectural nature of the stage; the whole presentation must possess a fundamental unity which it is the duty of the producer to achieve. In short, every member of the troupe must receive a special education, the renewal of the theatre meaning primarily a renewal of man in the theatre. No attempt was to be made to put into the limelight exceptional individuals, but rather to gather a troupe, a company which would live happily together and learn together, which would form a Chorus, the womb of all dramatic poetry. The young people could become poets, painters, musicians, dancers, mimes, actors—not artificially grouped and stylised, but inspired from within and part of an organic whole.

In 1924, Copeau retired from the Vieux-Colombier, taking with him part of his school. The next year, their numbers had to be reduced. Still seeking the original sources of the theatre, Copeau taught the remainder the art of improvisation after the manner of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. The 'Copiaux', as the little troupe became affectionately known to the country people, wandered about the country, acting in the open air, at the foot of mountains, or at the village inn, where they fraternised with the gatherers of the wine harvest, or else went rolling along the roads in an old cart on summer and winter nights alike, surrounded by the sections of their stage and their costumes. Their scenes were almost improvised and were adapted to the public, the circumstances, the season, and the part of the country. These young actors were healthy and almost completely rid of theatre dust. They often obtained by natural means that support from the public, those moments of perfect communion, which constitute the height of dramatic expression, and which so many aesthetes and theorists try to obtain by sophisticated means.

A few types began to stand out, and among them was Saint-Denis—who was first seen by the general public in "Noah."

In May 1929, André Obey, a friend of Copeau's joined the Copiaux at Lyon. Obey had written a dramatic work in collaboration with Denys Amiel, and seemed to possess a feeling for dramatic rhythm. Obey found an extraordinary affinity with Copeau and his ideas, and from the meeting of this young poet with the Copiaux a friendship began out of which was to spring the *Compagnie des Quinze*.

In the course of five fruitful years, Obey wrote six plays which allowed the *Compagnie* to

fulfil themselves in a large measure and to achieve some remarkable dramatic flights.

Three special features become apparent in their performances: the use of the Chorus, of a choreographic basis for movements, and the permanent scenic construction.

The scenic construction, which was used throughout, was elaborated by M. Saint-Denis and André Barsacq. It consisted of a solid background and walls with small window-openings for lights and effects. In place of the unsightly top hangings known as flies, was fixed a kind of large wooden wheel with holes in the spokes, and round the rim, for hanging scenery or lights, and the place of the hub could be taken by a light. Wooden pillars stood at intervals round each side of the wheel, which were used for holding pieces of scenery and for grouping actors. Without any additions such a stage, in its austere beauty, can stimulate the imagination much as the Japanese No theatre to which it bears some resemblance. This scenic construction was perhaps put to its most complete use in the production of "Don Juan" (1934), where 'stations' were planted like the mansions of the simultaneous scenes on a medieval stage. More recently, M. Saint-Denis, with the help of Denis Martin, has been experimenting with an adaptable and portable set, of which we may hope to see developments in London.

The fullest benefits of the collaboration of Saint-Denis and André Obey can be observed in the development of the Chorus technique. In "Noah," it is not very clear: the animals, delightful as they can be made, are not characters, nor chorus, nor even adaptable to the ballet technique. The sons and daughters of Noah form perhaps a mixture of character and chorus. But, in the second of Obey's plays, "The Rape of Lucrece," the man and the woman speakers play a part strangely resembling that of the two 'tchyobo' of the Japanese No theatre—even to the interruptions.*

* Before leaving the Vieux-Colombier, Copeau set his school a No play, "Kantan," to perform as a thorough test of their special resources. It only got as far as the dress rehearsal, but made a deep impression. We must be grateful to Saint-Denis for developing this vein; the Japanese theatre bears a certain resemblance also to the Greek, but is usually more subtle and has the advantage of being a living tradition to this day. Their stage is marked by a sober quality which, without seeking illusion, establishes a direct relationship between the actor and the public. Compare the stage of the Vieux-Colombier with its steps down into the auditorium.

THE WORK OF MICHEL SAINT-DENIS

A chorus of this kind can be used to regulate the tension, direct the thoughts of the audience, and preserve the rhythm of the play. The chorus technique becomes even clearer in "Loire" (1933).

Just as the timing of speech and action can be regulated by the chorus technique, the movements can be regulated on a choreographic basis to become as expressive and controlled as in a ballet, or, once again, as in the Japanese No. A simple and effective example of this was Tarquin on his way to Lucrece.

But the discovery and successful use of any of these elements might endanger the drama if any were allowed to dominate. The producer of understanding must be alive to quack remedies for difficult situations. We can safely say that, under the guidance of M. Saint-Denis the *Compagnie des Quinze* really used the theatre and the result of their full and harmonious use of this instrument was often poetry of the theatre.

It should also therefore be apparent that a producer of the distinction of M. Saint-Denis is not just another foreigner trying to impose an un-English style on English actors, as some critics would have us believe. The shortcomings of "Noah" and the "Sowers of the Hills" can be attributed to three things: the translation; the different conditions of production—we only have to think of the slow process of elaboration of the plays, not to mention the theatrical education of the company; and the fact that these plays are not truly representative of the matured technique of the *Compagnie des Quinze*. ("The Sowers of the Hills" is again a hesitant first dramatic work by a poet who has yet to find his way in the theatre).

We must wait to see "The Rape of Lucrece" or "Loire," and original English plays with a properly prepared troupe.

ERRATUM.

We regret that an unfortunate accident occurred in the type-setting of Mr. Lewis Casson's article on the Moscow Theatre Festival in the November number of "Drama."

In the second column of page 19, paragraphs 1-5 should have preceded paragraphs 6-7. Corrected copies of the magazine are now available and may be exchanged for faulty copies if forwarded to the office of the League.

DRAMA IN HULL

Mr. T. Sheppard, the Director of Museums at Hull, who is a Past-President of the Hull Literary Club recently gave a lecture to the Club on "Drama in Hull—Past, Present and Future."

With regard to the future of Drama in Hull, Mr. Sheppard is not very optimistic. He said it must be realised that the theatre which took so prominent a part in the social life of the city, has gone. Naturally the cinemas are largely responsible for the change as they are able to provide an entertainment in great comfort and at a cheap rate. Mr. Sheppard admitted occasionally going to the pictures, but he usually gets exasperated when he finds such anomalies as Henry VIII having his bed warmed with a Victorian bed warmer, and the Iron Duke being interviewed by a reporter to give his latest views on the Battle of Waterloo.

There is no doubt that the past history of the Drama in Hull is one of extraordinary interest and historical importance. Mr. Sheppard's earliest experiences were when as quite a small boy he saw the Ploughboys giving a performance in a North Lincolnshire village. He also remembers the Marionette Exhibitions which were given half a century ago in a shed in Marlborough Terrace near Beverley Road end, when admission was obtained at the price of a halfpenny or an empty jam jar.

As with other important places in the country, Hull early took an interest in the Drama, though this was principally in connexion with the Miracle Plays which were performed in the middle ages. At one time a large ark was hung from the roof in Holy Trinity Church, and on the approach of the Annual Performance in the Streets, this was removed and wheeled round the town. It also acted as a stage for the play dealing with Noah's Ark, which besides having a religious significance, certainly judging from the script which is still preserved had very humorous episodes.

At that period in York, no fewer than 54 stages were in the streets and performances given thereon simultaneously. We had not so many in Hull but still had quite a good few.

Mr. Sheppard enumerated the various theatres formerly existing in Hull, principally in the old town, and referred to the enormous Queens Theatre in Paragon Street which occupied the site now covered by Messrs. S. P. Wood, Ltd.

Within the memory of many present, Hull boasted its Theatre Royal, Grand Theatre and Alexandra Theatre. All these were well patronized and besides the Carl Rosa Opera Company and the D'Oyley Cart Opera Company, there were important visits of Edmund Tearle, and his Shakespearean Plays, Sir John Martin Harvey, Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson, and the Compton Comedy Company. In those days quite a large number of people actually saved money for some time beforehand in order to see as many as possible of these plays. In addition there were Hengler's Circus with its wonderful performance, and occasionally Hamilton's Diorama; the Empire in Grimsby Street, the Alhambra in Porter Street, and other forms of entertainment which seem to have disappeared for ever.

Mr. Sheppard said that the Theatre Royal had gone over to variety, the Grand Theatre had gone to the pictures, and goodness knows where the Alexandra Theatre will go.

To-day the Repertory Theatre had had to fight hard to get an audience notwithstanding it was the only one of its kind in the City.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
 INCORPORATING
 THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

President:
 LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN

Chairman of the Council:
 VISCOUNT ESHER

Director: GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer: ALEC REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone: MUSEUM 5022.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

IT is to be hoped that the fact that our account of the business meeting at the recent Conference of the League at Stratford is printed in small type will not tempt members of the League to leave it unread. Seldom has a League Conference dealt with matters of such importance both to the theatre in general and to our own more domestic problems. The National Theatre resolution was widely noted in the Press, and the debate proved of real value to those now engaged in organising the Movement. Of little less importance was the discussion on the part the League may play in assisting the Professional Theatre which in the Provinces is going through a difficult time. Sir John Martin-Harvey contributes to this issue of "Drama" a striking commendation of Mr. Bushill-Matthews' proposal for the establishment of First-Nighter Clubs, and more will be heard of this suggestion in the future. Turning to League matters, Mr. Emmet's resolution is now the subject of a special Sub-Committee appointed by the Council. Another Sub-Committee appointed by the Council has already produced a report on the proposed Three-Act Play Festival for submission to the Council and to the Central Festival Committee.

We are sure that Miss Carritt, whose letter is printed on page 46, is mistaken in thinking that Mr. Alec Rea's speech at the Conference was actuated by any kind of hostility to the Amateur movement. Such would indeed be strange from the Honorary Treasurer, who gives so much constant thought and help to the conduct of the League. If we interpret him aright, Mr. Rea was simply stressing the fact that essentially the League is an organisation no less concerned with the Professional than with the Amateur Theatre, and that certain of its members may well be individually more interested in professional than in amateur work. The presence of such men and women in the League and on its Council is surely a source of strength not of weakness, and is of great value, indirectly, to the Amateur Movement itself.

For some time we have been aware that there are many would-be playwrights among members of the League who would welcome a chance of collaboration. Some have good stories to tell but are inexperienced in dramatic construction, while others are conscious of a gift for writing dialogue but have little ability in the creation of a plot. We should be glad to put into touch members of the League who would care to take advantage of our mediation in this matter. In communicating with the Director, every would-be collaborator should state the particular help of which he stands in need, so that a suitable partnership may be ensured. The success of the scheme naturally depends on a fair number of enquiries. Where partnerships are possible of arrangement in the same district personal introductions would be given. Otherwise collaboration can effectively be maintained through the post.

We are reminded that the two plays reviewed recently in "Drama," "Circumstantial Evidence" by George H. Grimaldi, and "Created He Them" by Charlotte Bacon, published by Messrs. H. F. W. Deane & Sons, The Year-Book Press, are the two prize plays in the recent British Drama League Community Theatre Festival. Societies still looking out for plays of more than ordinary excellence will be well advised to consider these two dramas, which are each published at 1s. and may be obtained through the League's Bookshop.

"FOUR YEARS AT THE OLD VIC"

Reviewed by Edward Gordon Craig

THIS is a very remarkable book.

"How so?" you ask, looking provocative.

How so, indeed! Tell me, can you fly from Croydon to Australia and back in dashty days? No. That is a remarkable feat, but for all that, he who does it cannot write a book like Harcourt Williams' "Four Years at the Old Vic."* What is more, M. Stalin cannot, nor Signor Mussolini, nor the combined front benches of the House of Commons. They may all say they don't want to—fudge—they can't. They can *talk* about it, but they can't do it—so the slogan rings out, "What the Government *talks* about, Williams *does*."

"Why all this?" you ask. I will tell you. I am so sick and tired of hearing of the wonders of the hundreds of great men of to-day—those men of power—that I have just bought a tricky little machine (recently invented by a Chinaman in Lao-kai) which automatically estimates the great, the useful, the valuable, the useless, the small, et cetera. It is too complicated to explain here, but one can roughly state that it works on the Babington-Hansell system of balance. A dial register (Wyatt's pattern) gives us an exact estimate of each thing or person to which the Babington adducer has just been applied.

I was astonished as I observed this machine's findings. First was not always last, nor last first: but scientists, artists, even stage-managers, were in the first area (Hansell's scale), with grape-cultivators and cooks and also nurses and doctors. Jockies, politicians, merchants and croupiers—to pick four out of forty—were in the third area: dancers, coiffeurs, bankers, printers, editors, 'bus-drivers, were in the fifth area,—and so on.

The machine deserves a better description than I can give it, but brevity is my excuse. And briefly I discovered that this one book by Harcourt Williams is estimated by the machine (and the gods, if any still believe in them) as worth ten volumes of speeches by all the statesmen of the earth.

I agree with the machine and the gods.

To have taken the Old Vic in hand for four years—to have produced on its dear old stage, with dashed old (*i.e.*, young and sententious)

actors, nineteen of the ageless plays put together by the authors who are called Shakespeare—and to have done all this with success in spite of the infernal conditions... this places Harcourt Williams in a position second to none in the theatrical world of London. He has done deeds for which men in battles get the Victoria Cross and the D.S.O. He has achieved more than any K.C.B. achieves—and that without having been the recipient of any fine Order.

For what is there that you can offer to a stage-manager like Mr. Harcourt Williams, to a *traiteur* like M. Maurice Grailot, of Montparnasse, or to a vineyarder like M. Chateau Lafitte, without rendering yourself ridiculous, be you who you may? There are services you can measure, ticket and reward to scale: the artist's services, be he writer, theatre-man, vineyarder or M. Grailot, you cannot reward, for you cannot measure or ticket them. Still, for all this, there is no law against trying to: I'm even told there is a law saying you must try.

How would I reward Harcourt Williams, who is obviously one who will see us all damned before he'll feather his own nest? I would reward him by rewarding myself. If I had an eye to the future, and if I were trying to establish a National Theatre I would—now and without delay—create a small but adequate "*Preparation Fund*," to be used in preparing for that difficult and unprepared-for moment when the National Theatre is being built and the programme being planned. I would devote a portion of this "*Preparation Fund*" to giving the stage-managers and a few others selected (and Williams would be one of those stage-managers, unless we were daft) a kind of scholarship to travel—to Germany, to Italy, to Russia and Poland, there to see what was being done... not in order to come back and copy it, but to enrich an already fully-exercised experience.

As far as I can calculate from his excellent book, Harcourt Williams has produced 19 Shakespeare plays. I have seen three—one I was in a bad mood to enjoy properly; the second I liked very much, and the third I thought was first-class.

Now such an experienced stage-manager

* Putnam 10s. 6d.

"FOUR YEARS AT THE OLD VIC"

as Harcourt Williams, on seeing Shakespeare plays performed in Russia, Poland and Germany, could not fail to react towards the impressions in such a way as greatly to strengthen his own style. And it is this which I hope may be done—for it is this thought which came to me as I read his exciting, well-

written pages, telling between the lines of too many obstacles overcome, too many unnecessary hardships endured. Many a stage-manager would have thrown up the job in six months, for the Old Vic seems to me to have offered an artist but little that a true artist like Harcourt Williams is entitled to expect.

A NOTE ON THE STAGE LETTER

By P. B. Barry

IT seems to me that the Stage Letter has been shamefully neglected by writers on physical phenomena. We talk glibly of the marvels of the Radio, but this phenomenon of the stage epistle has apparently failed to attract the wonder and attention which it certainly deserves.

For instance, as a humble stenographer, I have always been intrigued by the speed of stage letter-writing. Although a moderately good hand, I personally have never been able to achieve the 300 words per minute which the average actor accomplishes not only with ease, but with persuasive flourishes. Still more have I been amazed by the ability of the player to write without a spot of ink, using an ordinary non-fountain pen. I have seen at least three actors and a dozen actresses dash off long passionate letters without taking more than one tiny dip into the ink-pot!

Again, stage letters appear to be specially sensitive to the Law of Gravitation. Perhaps now that Newton has been somewhat discredited on this matter, Professor Einstein will explain why the stage love-letter nearly always drops from its holder's grasp without any apparent cause. I have frequently seen a letter flutter from the tightly clasped fingers of an entirely composed heroine, and it has occurred to me that nothing but a sudden and inexplicable splash of gravity could have caused the phenomenon!

But this is not all! Stage letters by reason of a power for an explanation of which we again appeal to Professor Einstein, appear on occasions to possess a temporary invisibility. (Perhaps Space Time may have something to do with this business.) With my own eyes have I not beheld a fairly large letter dropped on a brilliantly lighted stage, whilst nine-tenths of the Company revolved round, without getting an inkling of its presence? I have seen a child crawling on hands and feet among its toys, and although the infant has exhibited almost diabolical wisdom in perceiving trivialities, the letter has preserved inviolate its invisibility until a gray-beard of eighty, with myopic vision and horn-rimmed glasses has pounced on it, the instant he came on the stage.

Quite as marvellous in our list of phenomena is the gift of *inverted* vision which the stage-letter can on occasions confer upon the humblest actor. I once saw a young player whose eyes were apparently normal, pick up a letter and read it, word for word, upside down.

Summing up these phenomena, I have come to the

conclusion that our scientists have a very interesting problem whereon to work, and I invite Professor Eddington and Professor Jeans to call a special meeting of the Royal Society to discuss the details. It would be well if the secrets of the phenomena could be placed on a widely democratic basis, so that we ordinary correspondents might be enabled to share the blessed privileges of the stage letter-writer.

LYONS' AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

A well varied programme of Five One-Act Plays was presented on October 19th, by the Cadby Hall Section of Lyons' Amateur Dramatic Society. The evening's bill can be said to have had rather more variety than entertainment value, and one play in particular had such small claim to dramatic form, that it afforded the cast no opportunity for histrionic ability.

Philip Johnson—always a sure success on a one-act play bill—was represented by his grim little tragedy, "Saturday Night." In this, Miss Eva Harber carried off the acting honours in the part of Janet Bryce, and was ably supported by Mr. H. L. Benson in the part of the husband.

"The Desperationist," by Olive Conway, was notable for the excellent team work the cast displayed. The characterisation was uniformly sound, and the pace and timing almost faultless.

Ronald Byron Webber's "100—Not Out" was admirably treated by its large cast, prominent of which was Miss E. Dudley Ward as the centenarian Mrs. Buckhurst. Here again, the well contrasted characters were admirably interpreted, and the play scored one of the successes of the evening.

H. B.

DALTON, LANCASHIRE.

The new Little Theatre in connection with the Settlement for Unemployed, which owes its existence to the enterprise of Mr. John Wood, was opened by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth on Saturday, November 23rd. An admirable programme of three one-act plays well displayed the excellent appointments of the stage, and augurs well for the future of this interesting enterprise.

THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

MINUTES of the Annual Conference held on Saturday, October 26th, at 10.30 a.m. at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Present—Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (in the chair) and 145 Delegates and Members.

Minutes.

The Minutes of the last Conference, which had been printed in the December, 1934, number of "Drama," were taken as read, and signed.

Chairman's Opening Address:

In opening the Conference, Mr. Whitworth reminded those present that 16 years ago the League's first Conference, organised by Miss Elsie Fogerty, had been held at Stratford, and that was the first Conference of the Theatre ever held in this country. It was a great privilege to be able to come to Stratford again, and he hoped that a Conference held at such a shrine of Drama would revive something of that spirit of dedication with which the League began.

Lord Lytton then proposed the following Resolution—

"That this Conference re-affirms the resolve of the British Drama League to promote the establishment of a National Theatre, and calls upon all members of the League to support the efforts now being made by the National Theatre Appeal Committee."

Lord Lytton reminded the delegates that the League was something more than an association of members of dramatic Societies. The League's members were people to whom the drama was a living form of expression, and therefore, they must be conscious of the gap which exists in the theatre of this country. While there was a National Gallery and British Museum there was no National Theatre. Those institutions had come into existence in response to no general demand, but they were in fact National and the country would not willingly do without them. They were part of the glory of England's national possessions. The Drama alone was not so represented. Lord Lytton then traced the history of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre from its origin twenty-five years ago to the present year when it had been decided to celebrate the King's Silver Jubilee by founding the National Theatre. Lord Lytton described the various ways in which it was hoped to raise money. He emphasised, however, that the great need at the moment was the conversion of public opinion. In conclusion, Lord Lytton earnestly commended the cause of the National Theatre to the members of the British Drama League.

In seconding the resolution, the Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton said that the British Drama League had an astonishingly strong influence on public opinion and she appealed for understanding and enthusiasm. To all those who cared about the reputation of their country, she asked that they should see that it did not suffer in comparison with other countries where there were national theatres. Under the National Theatre scheme young dramatists would have a chance of seeing their plays performed, and under its influence the national dramatic spirit would be promoted throughout the country. She concluded by appealing to all members to help spiritually in every way possible.

Mr. Giles Playfair then rose and moved the following amendment—

"That this Conference while reaffirming the resolve of the British Drama League to promote the establishment of a National Theatre, and while appreciating the efforts now being made by the

National Theatre Appeal Committee, believes that for the appeal to be entirely successful the National Theatre scheme should envisage a more national application than is at present contemplated."

Mr. Playfair said he considered the National Theatre should have a "new deal." The scheme he had put forward involved the scrapping of the idea of building an enormous edifice in London, as he did not believe the Committee would be able to get the people of this country to subscribe £350,000 for such a scheme. The Provinces were far more in need of national theatres than the people of London. It was there that real dramatic effort was appreciated, and he considered the time had arrived when the whole organisation of this National Theatre appeal had got to be overhauled.

The amendment was seconded by Miss Hastilow. Mr. Lingard (Stockport Garrick Society) supported the amendment.

Professor Searls (Hull University), speaking as a member from the Provinces, said that the ideal was to have a National Theatre in London with Companies touring the Provinces as part of its function. The centre and nucleus of the movement must be in London. Professor Searls also said he did not think money would be forthcoming for Mr. Playfair's scheme alone—the two must be combined.

Mr. Emmet (The Questors) supported Professor Searls. He thought that the proposal of touring companies should play a more important part in the National Theatre scheme, but London should not be neglected.

Mr. Purdom, speaking as a Londoner, supported Mr. Playfair.

Mr. Webb (Leamington and Warwick Drama Club) said he wanted occasionally to see real plays by real actors—the Provinces should have more than a few scraps from the banquet in London.

Mr. Fox thought a building in London was essential, though the need of the Provinces should be considered.

Mrs. Rogers (Clifton Arts Club) said that a National Theatre should be built for the honour of the country and for posterity. Mr. Playfair's scheme should be incorporated in that of Lord Lytton.

Miss Elsie Fogerty said that the reason why the theatres in the Provinces had closed down was entirely owing to lack of support. She instanced Miss Horniman's Gaiety Theatre which Manchester allowed to close down, and Sir Frank Benson who ruined himself serving the Provinces. There was no lack of Companies ready and anxious to tour. She also spoke from the Imperial point of view. Visitors from the Empire would not go to Cardiff to see our National Drama.

Mr. Benson (Medway Theatre Club) supported Lord Lytton and opposed the amendment.

Lord Lytton in reply said he would carry on with the scheme in default of evidence that Mr. Giles Playfair or anyone else could do it better.

Mr. Whitworth said that there would be justification in voting for Mr. Playfair's amendment if the establishment in London of a National Theatre prevented, National Theatre Companies touring the Provinces but this was obviously not so.

The amendment on being put to the vote was lost by 50 votes to 30.

The substantive motion was then carried by a large majority.

THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

Proposed by Mr. Ivor Brown, seconded by Miss Fogerty—

"That in view of the competition with the Drama now arising from various new forms of public entertainment, the Council of the League be asked to consider what steps can be taken to secure an increased measure of support for the Professional Theatre throughout the country."

Mr. Ivor Brown said the League was not a British Amateur Drama League but represented all interests in the theatre, and for that reason he was urging that more support should be given to the Professional Theatre. The theatre in this country received nothing from the Government but censorship and taxation, whereas in other countries it received assistance and encouragement. He wanted the Government stimulated to consider the case of the living theatre more favourably. He wanted more publicity for the theatre. The Theatre news was apt to get pushed aside in view of the competition of the films, wireless, and the coming television. He was sure, however, that the public interest in the theatre was far greater than most newspaper proprietors were prepared to admit. Mr. Brown said that the authority of this Conference would bear considerable weight, and he therefore urged all members to give his motion their support.

Miss Fogerty, in seconding the motion, said that we were in danger of losing one of the greatest arts in the world. She quoted Shakespeare's advice to the players from "Hamlet" and eloquently stressed the essential function of Drama as the moulding of the world, whether in tragedy or comedy, "nearer to the heart's desire."

The Hon. Mary Pakington supported the resolution from the point of view of the living artist as opposed to actors on the screen. There were plenty of actors for Provincial theatres but there was a lack of audiences.

Mr. Weston Wells proposed an addendum to the motion as follows—

"And to this end urges a reversal of the present attitude of Governments to the entertainment of the People, namely, the remission of Entertainments Tax as applied to living artists and the provision of Grants-in-aid towards Municipal Theatres."

This addendum was accepted by Mr. Ivor Brown and Miss Fogerty, and the resolution with the addendum was read as follows:—

"That in view of the competition with the Drama now arising from various new forms of public entertainment, the Council of the League be asked to consider what steps can be taken to secure an increased measure of support for the Professional Theatre throughout the country, and to this end urges a reversal of the present attitude of Governments to the entertainment of the People, namely the remission of Entertainments Tax as applied to living artists and the provision of Grants-in-aid towards Municipal theatres."

and on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. Alfred E. J. Emmet on behalf of the Quæstors—

"That this Conference urges the Council of the British Drama League to adopt a vigorous policy of expansion in the Provinces, and to create the necessary machinery for the provision of further practical services to its members throughout the country."

Mr. Emmet said that the purpose of this resolution was to suggest that the League was approaching a rather dangerous crossroads. What did the League mean to its affiliated Societies? In a large number

of cases the answer was "Not very much." The only solution to the problem was by decentralisation and thus bringing outlying members into personal touch with Headquarters. This was not a revolutionary but an evolutionary step. Mr. Emmet continued that he was convinced that any successful push must be made by local organisations and not by Headquarters. He proposed that Festival Area Committees should be requested by the Council to make concrete suggestions as to what was needed in each Area. He was convinced that if the League wished to live up to its high ideals something must be done immediately. The League should, and could exert a great influence and invoke enthusiasm for its work, and he urged the Council to take active measures without delay.

Mr. D. T. Morris seconded this resolution, and said greater support was needed from the British Drama League Headquarters, and Area Committees should be empowered to give more help to members. There was a decided demand that they should do more than organise the Festival. He was convinced that the League should have closer touch with its provincial members.

Mr. Maynard supported the resolution and said he thought that Area Committees should have power to organise Schools and send out professional advisers. He pointed out the dangers of County Committees swamping the League, and thought that the agreements with such Committees should be reconsidered.

Mr. Neale (Notts Drama League) said he thought the time had come for overhauling the administrative machinery of the League—there should be more direct contact between the Council and the Provinces.

Miss Mary Kelly reminded the meeting that the League had founded County Committees in nearly every County where there was no Rural Community Council, and the R.C.C.'s were in close touch with the Village Drama Section of the League.

Mr. Sharman said that the present proposals were all very well in theory, but in practice what could they amount to? In Liverpool a Federation of amateur societies had lately been formed, but no application for help had yet been received.

Mr. Hubert Wood in supporting the resolution said that this was a vital matter and was particularly interesting as coming from a resident in London. Apart from the Festival Committees there was no organisation outside London. A vast number of Societies were affiliated to the League, a great majority being small urban groups. They did not apply for help from London, but to local Festival Officials who without authority were giving such help when possible.

Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe supported Mr. Emmet and Mr. Wood. He said the organisation was already in existence in the various districts and they should be the Advisory Committees appointed by the Council.

Mr. Benson said that he did not think the Area Committees were composed of people who were experts on Drama, and he enquired what machinery they had to set up to provide experts?

Major North Coates (Lincs. R.C.C.) thought there was some misapprehension as to the functions of County Committees and Rural Community Councils. A great deal of useful work was being done by these bodies and the League had a lot of publicity thereby.

Miss Rees (Somerset Village Drama Committee) said that the Somerset County Committee encouraged their societies to affiliate direct with the League.

Mr. Wilson (Stockport Garrick Society) said he



LUCIE MANNHEIM AS "TRUDE"
IN THE PLAY "NINA"
BY BRUNO FRANK AT THE
CRITERION THEATRE, LONDON,
FROM A DRAWING BY
VERONICA HAIGH.



SETTING A SCENE IN "THE STROLLING CLERK" BY HANS SACH, AS RECENTLY PRODUCED BY MR. PHILIP WAYNE FOR THE MARYLEBONE PLAYERS, LONDON.

THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

considered the League would do more good in the Provinces if it were not so occupied with the Festival. If a Branch Office were opened in Manchester it would be a very valuable help to the surrounding Societies.

Miss Carritt thought it was not fair to ask Festival Committees to undertake more work. There were many small groups in need of help and she would be glad to give such help on behalf of the League.

Mr. Hirst proposed an addendum to the resolution which was seconded by Mr. Chelioti as follows:—

"and to this end to make the existing Festival Area Committees responsible for the development of wider public support for the League and for the promotion of general activities of the League throughout that Area."

Professor Searls asked if the Conference wished to make the League a live movement? No machinery existed outside the Festival.

Mr. Bushill-Matthews suggested that a British Drama League Information Bureau should be installed at all Festivals and thus show the League to be existing for something broader in scope than the Festival.

The Chairman, in summing up the discussion, said that the precise means of implementing the resolution raised many problems of organisation. It had been very gratifying to hear so many expressions of loyalty to the League. He thought it was only fair to remind the Conference that a very great deal of advice and information was being sent out daily from Headquarters, but he did realise that the value of decentralisation would be the personal contact. He thought that perhaps it would be better to leave Mr. Hirst's addendum for the consideration of the Council. On being put to the vote the proposal to add the addendum was defeated by 20 votes to 12.

The resolution was then carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. Bushill-Matthews, seconded by Mr. Gordon Toy—

"That the Council of the League should consider the means of establishing 'First Nighter Clubs' in the various Provincial Centres with the aim of ensuring better first night audiences for touring and repertory companies appearing in the local Professional Theatre in legitimate dramatic work."

Mr. Bushill-Matthews said that the aim was to ensure better first-night audiences for touring and repertory companies in the Provinces. On Monday nights companies had to appear before houses with the seats half empty, and those people interested in the people interested in the Professional side of the Theatre realised how greatly audiences could contribute to the success of a play. Membership of First-nighter Clubs could be open to all interested, and not confined to members of the League.

Mr. Gordon Toy in seconding the motion said that First-nighter Clubs could also approach theatre managements where prices were high and resist increase in prices for special attractions.

Miss Phyllis Rodway of Birmingham supported the resolution.

Mr. Henry Tossell (Manager of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre) said that such support would be a great help for Theatre Managers. The realisation that better support was forthcoming in the Provinces, would place more and better Companies on the road. The number of touring companies on the road had now dropped from 134 to 34.

Mr. Benson instanced the case of a Repertory Theatre at Rochester which had closed owing to lack of support.

The resolution on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. C. B. Purdom, seconded by Miss Pagan—
"That the Council of the League be asked to consider organizing a Festival for full-length plays."

Mr. Purdom said that the Festival had brought about a great advance of amateur work but he doubted if it had produced an improvement in acting. The one-act play did not offer a sufficient acting test. The B.D.L. should encourage the best type of play. Mr. Purdom said he was quite prepared to suggest a scheme as to the organisation of a full-length play Festival, and he very much hoped the Council would consider it.

Miss Pagan, in seconding the resolution, said a similar proposal had been made at the S.C.D.A. Conference in Perth this year, and the Manager of the Perth Repertory Theatre had offered his theatre for a week for such a Festival.

Mr. Maynard (South Wales Division) thought that such a Festival would perforce be confined to wealthy Societies.

Mr. Hubert Wood said that three-act plays should not cost more than one-act, but there were many difficulties in the organisation of a three-act play Festival. The advantages would be enormous, and he hoped the proposal would not be turned down by the Council without very careful consideration.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mrs. Porter, seconded by Mr. Harold Matthews—

"That, for the furtherance of the ideals of progress and originality in Amateur Dramatics, which is the aim of the British Drama League Festival, the Council be asked to give a lead to Societies entering the Festival, by publishing a list of plays which they recommend as fulfilling these objects."

Mrs. Porter said of all the activities of the League the Festival had the most publicity in the Provinces, and she thought that the present policy of choice of play was not satisfactory, and often detrimental to the prestige of the League. She asked why certain teams entered the Festival for one year and then retired? Why it was so difficult to get audiences? How could one account for adjudicators condemning the choice of play and at the same time awarding first place to the team, and why were so many disagreeable plays chosen? Mrs. Porter suggested that there should be five set categories, a play from one of which might be chosen by the Competitor.

1. Any scene from Shakespeare.
2. Any original one-act play.
3. Three plays selected by the Council of the League.

Miss Carritt thought the idea a dreadful one. Producers must cast to type. The proposal would take away all educational value of the individual choice of play.

Mrs. Provis said that if the plays were so limited it would kill the one-act play.

Mr. Emmet thought the solution of the problem was to improve the choice of play, and there would be great difficulty in drawing up the selected list.

Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe was opposed to any restriction of the individuality of Societies.

Miss Birch supported the resolution.

On being put to the vote the resolution was lost by a large majority.

Place of 1936 Conference.

The Chairman read a letter from Mr. Chelioti on behalf of the Merseyside and West Lancashire Division,

THE DRAMA LEAGUE CONFERENCE

inviting the League to hold its next Conference at Liverpool.

Mr. Lingard proposed, Mr. Stanley B. Adams seconded, and it was

Resolved: "That the Conference in 1936 should be held

in Liverpool."

The Conference closed with a vote of thanks to the Governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre for the use of the Conference Hall, proposed by Miss Fogerty, and carried unanimously.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TOO MUCH "FOREIGN DRAMA."

DEAR SIR,

When I read the letter from A. M. Jones in the current issue of "Drama" expressing his (or her) views on "Too Much Foreign Drama," I immediately jumped up and sang "Rule Britannia." Then I sat down before the shelves which contain most of our dramatic literature, determined to THINK BRITISH. The result was disappointing. Shaw, Ibsen, Yeats, O'Casey, Van Druten, Sierra, Gay, Wilde, Benavente, Synge, Houseman, Drinkwater, Tchchev, Maugham, Pirandello, Coward, Brieux, Dunsany, and the rest: I could only think of them in terms of drama, not of nationality.

The Journal of the League is called "Drama," not "British Drama," and it is doubtless read in Russia, Germany, Austria, and other regrettably foreign places, as well as in Mug-on-the-Wump, Eng. When we were in Norway last year, we made an acquaintance—a young man—who astonished us by his wide knowledge of English plays. He had just produced "The Ghost Train" in a small town near Oslo. Doubtless there were indignant letters in the local press that week demanding to know what was the matter with "Peer Gynt."

There is one sentence in Mr. (or Miss) Jones' letter which does merit attention—the final one, which suggests that the League should change its name to the "International Drama League." Now, that opens up some very exciting possibilities. Here is something for Mr. Whitworth to get his teeth into. He has founded our splendid British Drama League; will he not now go forward and found an International Drama League? I think that he would get enthusiastic support from all over the world. What form such a League would take I do not know—one's brain reels at the thought of International Festivals—but it would have one excellent result. We should get more articles dealing with the foreign stage in our journal. We might even get a WHOLE SUPPLEMENT dealing with it.

Yours faithfully,

JOCELYNE WEBB.

Delft,

Tadworth, Surrey.

DEAR SIR,

Having read Mr. A. M. Jones' letter in "Drama" of this month, I applaud his suggestion to change the name of the League to "International Drama League."

Why not make the Drama international? Why shouldn't Mr. Lewis Casson write his interesting articles about the Moscow Stage, etc., after all, art is international. That's why people with a broader horizon than Mr. Jones introduce Chinese art in Britain as well as Dutch and Italian paintings.

If Mr. Jones had not the British pre-war mentality he would often prefer the foreign broadcasting programmes to those of the B.B.C. and broaden his outlook and taste.

Yours sincerely,

ANTON DE BRUYNE.

11, Woodburn Terrace,
Edinburgh.

ECHO OF THE CONFERENCE.

DEAR SIR,

It is a pity that the sins of the last General Meeting had to be visited on the Conference by the snub administered in Mr. Alec Rea's speech of welcome (?) to the delegates at the Mayor's reception. Possibly some of us take our work too seriously. Perhaps some of us enjoy having our leg pulled. Certainly the enthusiasm of many who had come long distances and looked for encouragement and inspiration was effectively quelled. A few may have recalled regretfully Mr. Gordon Craig's words—"What I ask first . . . is Courtesy. That we try to consider one another with genuine, excited, vivid consideration seems to me essential in any art so difficult and complicated as that of the theatre."

Mr. Craig's essential virtue seems to have been sadly to seek at this year's General Meeting, this year's Festival, and this year's Conference.

Yours faithfully,

DOROTHY N. CARRITT.

Wells, Somerset.

For Editorial comment, see "British Drama League Notes" on page 40.

RECENT RELEASES.

Messrs. Samuel French announce that "A Man's House" by John Drinkwater, which was produced at the Malvern Festival, 1934, is now available for amateur societies. The action of the play takes place in our interior scene, and has a cast of sixteen. "Old King Cole," a play for children, by Clifford Bax, and "The Enemy," by Channing Pollock, are also available.

The demand for the Drama League "Playlover's Diary for 1936" has been unexpectedly great, and it may go out of print. To avoid disappointment orders should be sent to 9, Fitzroy Square without delay, either for the leather-bound edition at 3/6, or for the cloth at 1/-. Special terms for bulk orders by affiliated societies.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE STROLLING CLERK FROM PARADISE.

In these days when the professional stage neglects the one-act play almost entirely, it is interesting to note that in Germany, at any rate, there is an old comedy which still holds the interest of both amateurs and professionals, as the most enduring national favourite over there. Hans Sachs, the old Meistersinger, has given to his best comedy "The Strolling Clerk" such a contrast of motive and such a strong spice of peasant cunning that, even at this early date (1550) the farcical element is quite outshone by the human comedy. Hence the lasting values, which hold equally good for an English audience, the only obstacle to be surmounted being the delivery of strongly-flavoured four-foot couplets which have to be well controlled, sustained and timed, to capture the attention of modern playgoers.

A performance of the newly published version from the Oxford University Press has just been given by picked younger members of the Marylebone Players, a company that has had considerable success in many theatres in Germany and in Vienna, and the performance of the little comedy (produced by Mr. Philip Wayne), proved full of interest as to stagecraft and audience psychology.

SCUNTHORPE.

The Scunthorpe Players' Society are now hoping to provide a People's Theatre for the town of Scunthorpe, and rules have been drawn up modelled upon Little Theatre movements in such towns as Middlesbrough, Hull, Sheffield, Leicester, and elsewhere. The Society hope to present four to six plays during the Winter season, giving a week's production to each play. The old "Empire" will be the home of the Society's activities, and has been re-christened "The Scunthorpe Repertory Theatre." The Magistrates have expressed willingness to license the building for amateur efforts only, as they feel that the object of the Society is one worthy of encouragement. Squads of voluntary workers have been busy for weeks cleaning, re-decorating and renovating the interior, and they have accomplished astonishing results. The Society have selected "Journey's End" for their opening production during Armistice Week in November.

MISS IVY SMITHSON'S RECITAL AT STOCKTON.

Commenting on this event, which took place on October 8th, the "Darlington and Stockton Times" said:

"A recital by Miss Ivy Smithson, the well-known Stockton disease, is an event of such importance in the artistic life of the town that it was gratifying to find a large audience at the Jubilee Hall on Tuesday night, when in a delightfully varied programme Miss Smithson had the collaboration of Mr. E. Roxburghe-Kelso, of Darlington, and Mr. William Robson, of Yarrow, as solo pianist."

"Once again Miss Smithson gave proof of her wonderful technical equipment, and it must have been a sheer joy for her audience. Whether in animal studies, child studies, lyric verse, dramatic verse, or in the ambitious task of bringing a Hans Anderson fairy story to real life, Miss Smithson revealed not only remarkable voice control and production but superb technique"

"BALLET"

AT THE THEATRE OF THE
CHELTENHAM COLLEGE BOYS CLUBS, NUNHEAD.

Here is a show which surprises. Having its beginnings in a dumb-show Pantomime at a Summer Camp, it has passed through the stages of trimming, stood the racket of two productions at the Festival Theatre at Cambridge and has established full and pure-blooded "Ballet" in the back-streets of South London. Someday it will be "discovered." The Rich and Intelligent will give it a chance in the West End—and congratulate themselves on having discovered "The show that is Different." Meanwhile we continue to be surprised and delighted at ideas conceived, worked out, rehearsed and danced by Boys; by sets designed and made by Boys; at a stage lighted and managed by Boys.

The impression gained during the evening was that the Ballet was the work of a team—"The Ballet's the thing." There seemed to be no place for stars. The intricate movements of the novices in "Road Up" the Racegoers in "Newmarket," the Corps de Ballet in "Impromptu" were as impressive as the perfect control and lightness of touch by two sleepy clowns in "Impromptu." But we cannot refrain from noticing a shop-walker and his assistant with the tape measure in "Bargain Basement": a boy sacrificed to the god Quetzacoatl: the blood lust of the Indian Warrior: a card-sharper in "Newmarket": the awful monotony of madness in "Asylum," and the dancing of John Williams in "Impromptu." This Ballet set to music of Handel was the event of the evening. Here was "Ballet" in utter simplicity—no story, no set, no subtlety of lighting, no costumes but coloured vests and shorts. This surely was the acid test of dancing. For choreographer, soloists, and corps de ballet "Impromptu" was a triumph. "What is the secret of the Ballet?" we asked ourselves as the final curtain fell. "Genius?" yes: Hard work? yes . . . and something more. When dancers and spectators had gathered in the Chapel to say the office of Compline we found the answer . . . "Non nobis Domine . . . non nobis Domine"

FRANCIS.

THE SUNGLOW PLAYERS.

On November 11th, at the Fortune Theatre, the Sunglow Players gave a very able performance of Ivor Novello's play "Proscenium."

The play, with good parts for most of its eighteen characters, was well cast and the pace of the production well kept up—fast over the lighter scenes, yet with pauses here and there that gave point to a phrase, to an action, and never dragging in the emotionally laden scenes. The team work, at the end of the first act, with the stage hands building the scene around them, was especially good.

Both chief parts, those of Gray and Norma, were played with sincerity and feeling. After a beginning that was a little wooden, and a first act that here and there got a little out of control, their performances matured and steadied and they brought their story to a convincing close. A full house gave the play a most genial reception.

H. M. G.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

NOTTINGHAM PLAYGOERS' CLUB.

The season opened with performances of "The Apple Cart" and the usual Civic Reception by the Lord Mayor (President) and Lady Mayoress. During the season the following three-actors have been chosen—"Major Barbara" (Shaw), "As you like it" (Shakespeare) and "The New Tenant" (MacOwan). The One-Acters are "Boccaccio's Untold Tale" (Kemp), "Humanly Speaking" (Peach), "The Quick and the Dead" (Russell) "The Pup" (Sutton). Special facilities are given to plays written by members, and these will include the one-act plays "The Settlers" (Odams), "Cumber King" (Statham), and the 1936 Walter Briscoe Award Play when selected by Mr. John Bourne (Editor, The Amateur Theatre), Dr. Granger (Vice-Principal of University College), and Colonel John Jardine are among the Chairmen and the season will conclude with a display of Natural Movement Dancing which is on the lines of Greek Classic Dancing. The subscription is 7s. 6d., and intending members should apply to Mr. Nevill Truman, the Secretary, who is also Chairman of the Nottingham Little Theatre Committee, and Hon. Organiser of the National Drama Festival for the City area. His address is Moot Hall Chambers, Nottingham.

THE GWENALLT DRAMATIC COMPANY, BANGOR, N.W.

Last day of October the Gwenallt Dramatic Company Bangor were entertained to dinner by their President W. Gower Griffiths, Esq., J.P., and Mrs. Gower Griffiths. Mr. Gower Griffiths is taking very great interest in this Company, who have done excellent work since their formation four years ago. Amongst other plays they have performed in several different counties with considerable success are "The Farmer's Wife" (Phillpotts), "Hobson's Choice" (Brighouse), and are at present rehearsing "The Devonshire Cream" (Phillpotts), all in Welsh. They have won prizes in Eisteddfodau and have been the means through their services to raise the sum of £1,500 for Churches, Chapels, and institutions. Their motto is to learn well, give the best possible performance wherever they go, and that always accompanied by good scenery. After the dinner members of the Company gave songs, duets, recitations, stories, etc. Also several had written verses suitable for the occasion. Miss Meriel Williams of Llangallen was present representing the Welsh National Theatre, and she gave an interesting address on the drama. A vote of sympathy was passed with their zealous Secretary, Mr. Jeremiah Jones who has been ill for some time. Mr. and Mrs. Gower Griffiths were thanked most heartily for their kindness.

CLIFTON ARTS CLUB DRAMATIC CONTEST.

The Clifton Arts Club Dramatic Contest is without doubt a fine opportunity for the new dramatist whose chances of seeing his work performed are still comparatively remote despite the activities of the Little Theatres. Original plays are judged in actual performance, and the principal awards go to the plays which the adjudicator considers the most satisfactory when presented on the stage. For the ninth contest (which took place on Oct. 30th, 31st and Nov. 1st and 2nd) it was felt that the best method of adjudication was for one person to judge

both the MS. and the performances. Accordingly the 78 manuscripts sent in were read by the adjudicator, Mr. F. Sladen-Smith and from these he selected nine plays to be performed. From these nine he selected three to appear in the Final on the Saturday night. It was Mr. Sladen-Smith's opinion that most of the plays sent in were of an unusually high standard, and therefore the final sifting was no easy matter. The plays which won the first and second prizes were (1st) "Eastward in Eden," a daring treatment of the Garden of Eden theme by Nora Ratcliff, (2nd) "The Spinneys," a country drama by W. S. Dyer. The third play on the final programme "Ladies-in-Waiting," a vivid play for an all-women cast by Wendy St. John Maule, was also much appreciated. Mr. Horace Annesley Vachell presided and presented the Contest trophy to the team which, under the direction of Nora Roberts, played "Coronations," by Stephen Barnett. The prize for poetic drama was won by "La Reine S'Amuse" by J. V. L. Godefroy.

ADULT SCHOOL PLAYERS, MORLEY.

It is one thing to acquire a reputation... and an entirely different (and a much more difficult) thing to maintain it!

But the reputation for creditably performing plays out of the ordinary run, acquired after many years of hard work by the Adult School Players at Morley, has not suffered by their recent productions, and last week's show, "She Passed Through Lorraine," would do much to enhance it.

I have a great deal of admiration for the enthusiasm and ingenuity displayed by this band of players. On a small, cramped stage they manage to create excellent effects and their setting for last week-end's production was very effective. It was simple, yet good, had been made by themselves at little cost, and formed a striking background, with the correct atmosphere for the interpretation of this fine play.

"She Passed Through Lorraine," a comedy by Lionel Hale possessing a good deal of satire and a considerable quantity of worth-while sentiment, offered great scope, and the Players made a good impression.

The President (Mr. Albert Tempest) had some good workers with him, including Mr. Kirk as Secretary, Mr. Carver, Treasurer, Mr. Albert Ainsworth, business manager, and Mr. John Almond, stage manager.

R. S.

DANCING COMPETITION.

The "Dancing Times" proposes to organise a Society Dancing Competition next March, when the entrants will be confined to genuine amateur members of the various "Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Societies."

The exact details will be announced later but tentatively it is suggested there should be four competitions: (a) Solo Demi-character, Character or National; (b) Solo with song, Tap or Musical Comedy; (c) Duo with song, Tap or Musical Comedy; and (d) Group, of at least six. Any concerted number that has been given by the Society making the entry.

In all instances the dances presented must have been given or be about to be given in some production by the Society of which the entrant is a member.

the
tor,
also
cted
ght,
the
and
The
were
the
The
The
og,"
ohn
rson
ntest
Nom
nett.
eine

d as
g to

play
n of
rley,
has
ould

ism
On a
dian
n was
mish
ach-
arm-

y by
and a
often
sion.
good
ctary,
sines
r. S.

Stage
renew
of the
etries."
tentat
critique
l; 6
Dun
up, a
gru
e has
on by

V
Z
E
C
D
E
C
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z
>

ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Charrington Street, Crowndale Road, N.W.1

TEL: EUSTON 1769

Under the Direction of
Producer and Manager

EDITH NEVILLE
ROSS PEZARO

DECEMBER PERFORMANCES, 1935

EVENINGS at 8.0 p.m.

5th, 6th and 7th

The Good Companions by J. B. Priestley and
Edward Knoblock

THEATRE RE-OPENS JANUARY 23rd 1936

Front and Reserved Seats 2/6 & 1/6; Admission 7d.
Season Ticket for same seat for ten plays
15/-, 12/6 and 5/-

Special Play Production Course, including classes in Acting,
Elocution, Stage Dancing, Stage Deportment, Make-up, etc.

Vacancies for men and women of experience
and ability for Amateur Repertory Company,
and for Instrumentalists for Theatre Orchestra

Send stamp for prospectus to:

The Secretary, St. Pancras People's Theatre, Ltd., at
the above address. Interviews by appointment.

DRAMA LEAGUE COSTUMES

Hire your Costumes for the
coming season from

The Costume Department

9, FITZROY SQUARE,
LONDON, W.1.

All Periods

All Styles

Expert Assistance

Quick Service

Telephone: MUSEUM 5022

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE BOOKSHOP

FOR QUICK SERVICE

'Phone:- MUS. 5022

PLAYS AND BOOKS SUPPLIED

AT THE SHORTEST NOTICE

9, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

PLACE YOUR

ORDER FOR

SCENERY

WITH

WITH GUARANTEED SATISFACTION

J. COALES

GIVE ME A TRIAL — YOU WILL ALWAYS DEAL WITH ME
ENTIRE PRODUCTIONS SUPPLIED. — ALL SIZES — DRAPERIES, ALL COLOURS.

A large number of MUSICAL COMEDIES and PLAYS in stock

Either the original ones purchased direct from West-end or otherwise built and painted by well-known artists

I CAN QUOTE YOU A PRICE UNBEATABLE

J. COALES, Chief Office; MONTGOMERY YARD,
GREAT CHURCH LANE, LONDON, W.6. (RIVERSIDE 0971/2)

Chas. H. FOX Limited

184 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1.

Telegrams: Theatricals, Westcant, London.

Telephone: Holborn 9557-9.

Established over 60 years

Theatrical Costumiers & Wig Makers.

❖
**COSTUMES AND WIGS
ON HIRE FOR
ALL OPERAS & DRAMATIC PLAYS**

❖
QUALITY, CORRECTNESS, CLEANLINESS, SERVICE.

WRITE FOR ESTIMATES

SPECIAL TERMS TO BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

THE CENTURY THEATRE

ARCHER STREET, W.11 (continuation of Westbourne Grove)

Station: Notting Hill Gate. 'Bus Routes 15 and 52 pass the Theatre.

27, 28, 31, 46 cross Westbourne Grove near the Theatre.

Theatre available for

**DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES, REHEARSALS, CONCERTS, ORCHESTRA PRACTICES,
LANTERN LECTURES, MEETINGS, BAZAARS, ETC. ETC.**

Its EXCELLENT ACOUSTIC QUALITIES make it Ideal for SOUND RECORDING

Can be hired by the hour, day, week or longer.

Moderate terms.

For further particulars, apply Secretary.

Telephone: PARK 6870

SCENERY FOR HIRE

FOR STAGE SETTINGS, MASKS, TAPESTRIES, PROPS, FOR ALL PURPOSES

LESLIE YOUNG

ARTIST AND DESIGNER

(COVENT GARDEN—RESIDENT OLD VIC, SADLERS' WELLS)

ANY DESIGN PAINTED TO ORDER SHAKESPEARE & HERALDIC EXPERT

All Comm (Temp.)

6, BRACKENDALE GARDENS, UPMINSTER, ESSEX.

Phone: WAT 6849

